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ABSTRACT

One hundred and eighty part-time instructors in 25 Alabama technical colleges responded to a questionnaire designed to obtain (1) demographic data on selected variables; (2) an assessment of the unique perceived competencies and professional development needs of this population; and (3) information to be used in the design of a program delivery system to meet the professional development needs of part-time instructors. The study found that the majority of the instructors worked at jobs other than teaching, taught two or three times a week, had work experience in 43 different occupational areas, and had taught at least three years. Only 27 of the instructors had attended college, while only 27 percent had participated in inservice professional development activities. Ninety-three percent of the instructors think that part-time vocational instructors need help in developing teaching skills, and 89 percent indicated they would be interested in participating in teacher education activities. The study concluded that these part-time instructors want and would attend inservice professional development courses. On the basis of the study results, the development activities should be intense, short, highly concentrated, local, and practical. Part-time instructors should be compensated in some way for participating, and a professional development plan for each part-time instructor based on feedback from instructors, other faculty, and administrators should be developed and monitored. (KC)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF PART-TIME TECHNICAL COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS

There are several factors that have and will continue to influence the growth of the part-time technical college programs. Jobs at the entry level of many occupational areas are becoming crowded. Technology is advancing at a pace which demands workers be retrained and up-graded at regular intervals. Population shifts to the "Sunbelt State" from the interior states. The flexibility and versatility of the technical college to adapt its curriculum to meet these changing conditions have been among the factors that have contributed to the success of these programs. A more difficult adjustment for part-time programs to make, may be facing the technical college of the future. This adjustment is caused by a combination of two factors: (1) changes in student expectations, and (2) the difficulty part-time faculty members have in incorporating new teaching techniques and strategies into their programs. Today's and tomorrow's student tends to be different from those of the past. Most

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likely they have one or more of the following characteristics: under-employed, entering or re-entering the labor market, minorities, or making career changes. The results are that today's student is older, more consumer conscious, and vitally concerned with the fast marketability of knowledge and skills.

A cultural lag exists between expectations of today's students and many postsecondary faculty members. Educational research provides documentation of new teaching strategies. These findings are published in numerous professional publications. Unfortunately, many teachers are not using these strategies. Too many technical college teachers still provide traditional time based, lock step, group instructional approaches to learning. This may occur because they are unaware of new techniques and strategies. Cohen and Brawer indicate that many faculty members report that they read neither scholarly journals nor journals related to professional education.

The majority of part-time instructors have primary job responsibilities outside the field of teaching. Most of these instructors have had no formal preparation

in teaching techniques and skills prior to their employment as teachers. They are employed on the basis of their practical experience in the particular occupation they teach. Teacher certification requirements in many states do not require part-time occupational teachers to participate in teacher education programs. Although, in-service professional development activities are an accepted fact for all full-time vocational-technical teachers (Ely, 1973) part-time instructors are not required to participate. A review of literature indicates that administrators are concerned with providing meaningful in-service activities for their technical college staff. Most would reject the concept that a good teacher is someone who has taken a certain number of education courses, but instead is someone who has mastered specific professional competencies in working with adult students, basic academic skills and occupational proficiency.

The professional competency of part-time vocational teachers likely would be increased if they were involved in planning and participating in their own professional

development activities (Lano, 1971). It is important to recognize the worth of self perception for planning professional development activities. Morano (1973), for example, reported one's perceptions of strengths and weakness to be helpful in planning meaningful professional development activities. Heneman (1974) also described the importance of individual insight for determining personal training needs.

Explicit identification of professional competencies should enable teachers to use their insights to assess their professional needs. Walsh (1960) identified 107 competencies needed by trade and industrial teachers. Other research studies have continued to provide additional data on vocational-teacher competencies (e.g. Brown and Okely, 1973; Cotrell, et. al., 1973; Graziano, 1974; Gunderson, 1971; O'Kelley, et. al.,1973; Pope,1972). Many of those identified competencies were synthesized into the instrument used in this study to assess perceived professional developmental needs of part-time teachers. That instrument known as the "Instructor's Questionnaire" was intended to be used in conjunction

with an "Administrator's Questionnaire" developed for a parallel study of deans of instruction.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to determine present demographic status of Alabama's part-time post-secondary vocational instructors, indices of their current preparation, their perceived needs for additional training in educational skills and competencies, and their educational preferences for meeting those needs.

Objectives of the Study

In view of the purpose of this study, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To describe experience, employment, and education of part-time vocational technical teachers in the State of Alabama.
2. To assess the unique needs for teacher preparation programs involving training and education for assisting with their professional development.
3. To design a program delivery system to meet the professional preparation needs of part-time instructors.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this study were collected from part-time instructors teaching in Alabama Technical Colleges. A questionnaire was developed and distributed. A group of instructors was used to establish the content and validity of the questionnaire. Data from the validation study, and resources provided in the review of literature, contributed to the item content of the final version of the questionnaire.

There were 315 part-time instructors who received an "Instructor's Questionnaire" designed to collect:

1. Basic Descriptive information about the part-time instructors themselves.
2. Information on competency content for inclusion in in-service training programs.
3. Identification of strategies and constraints for consideration in the design of a professional development delivery system to meet the in-service needs of part-time instructors.

Subjects

One hundred forty instructors responded to the first mailing of the questionnaires and 40 responded to an additional mailing. A meta-analysis of differences

between the 140 and the 40 respondents on 15 demographic items resulted in a chi-square in the acceptance region for an hypothesis of no difference between the groups. The conservative assumption for the two groups of 140 and 40 respondents is that each group represents the population. The two groups therefore were combined for statistical analyses.

Results

Demographic Features

Employment and Experience.

1. The majority of the instructors (68.9%) worked at jobs other than teaching.

2. The majority (74%) taught two (34%) or three (40%) nights per week.

3. The 180 instructors had work experience in 43 different occupational areas.

4. Twenty-four percent had three years or less teaching experience.

Education.

1. Only twenty percent of instructors take a vocational education course while in high school.

2. Fifty-five percent of the instructors graduated from high school, as opposed to receiving a GED.

3. Seventy-six percent of the instructors received no vocational training in the military.

4. Fifty-seven percent of the instructors attended a post-secondary vocational institution.

5. Only 27 of the instructors had attended college with 18% receiving teacher education instruction.

6. Only 27% of the instructors had participated in in-service professional development activities.

Needs for teacher preparation programs

Teaching skills. Ninety-three percent of the instructors think there is a need for part-time vocational instructors to be helped with developing teaching skills.

Teacher education activities. Eighty nine percent of the instructors indicated that they would be interested in participating in teacher education activities.

Teacher Education Needs.

1. Thirteen percent of the instructors indicated that their need to learn teaching skills and strategies were not currently being met.

2. Instructors indicated that there were several ways they are currently using to increase their teaching skills, the most productive being self-study.

3. Only 13% of the teachers indicated that they would not expect to grow personally as a result of teacher education in-service activities.

4. Thirty-six percent of teachers indicated an expectation of a pay raise for participating in teacher education activities.

Program Delivery System

Seventy-six percent of the instructors would like to participate in short workshops limited to a specific topic that are held at various locations throughout the state.

Competency content. Competencies were separated for classification purposes into 8 categories: a) orientation to vocational teaching, b) preparation for

instruction, c) presentation of instruction, d) application of learning, e) evaluation, f) classroom/ laboratory management, g) human relations, and h) professional role. Meta analyses for all categories were significant. Dominant departures from expected frequencies under hypotheses of chance were characterized by more responses than expected in the "no help" and "slight help" categories and fewer responses in the "moderate help" and "much help" categories.

Strategies and constraints.

1. Fourth-five percent of the instructors indicated a willingness to participate in teacher education activities from 1 to 5 weeks per activity; only 4 percent were willing to participate for ten weeks or more (an academic quarter).

2. Twenty-eight percent are willing to participate in teacher education activities 1 day per week and 18% 2 days per week.

3. Thirty percent of the instructors would like to have the times for teacher education programs limited to 1 to 3 hours per class.

4. Thirty-nine percent would be willing to participate in teacher education activities 4 hours or more per class.

5. Twenty-two percent of the instructors indicated they were not willing to travel to participate in teacher education activities; 15% would travel up to 50 miles; and 52% up to 100 miles.

6. Thirty-six percent of the instructors wanted teacher education activities held on weekends.

7. Thirty-three percent wanted teacher education activities held between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm.

8. Twenty-five percent wanted teacher training activities held during evening hours.

9. There was no preferred time of year for teacher training activities.

Conclusions

It has been shown that part-time instructors, in general (93%), indicated a desire for participation in teacher education and in-service activities. However, the same instructors, on prompting to identify areas of competency for which they need help, overwhelmingly checked "need no help" or "need slight help." This

anomaly suggests the following interpretations: That part-time instructors a) do not understand what the competencies are, b) need to develop other competencies beyond those provided as items in the present questionnaire, c) teach, not according to competency concepts, but according to their perceptions of how they themselves learned their occupational skills.

The majority of part-time post-secondary instructors were not participating in in-service or teacher education activities. This may be a result of lack of opportunity in that their institutions provide no systematic program for part-time instructors. A further possibility is lack of certification requirements for part-time instructors in terms of teacher education courses.

A majority (76%) of part-time teachers have taught at least 3 years. This may be long enough to indicate the need for help with getting the job done but not long enough to develop from the job the theoretical expertise necessary for expressing themselves in the lexicon of education presented in the questionnaire. Perhaps future surveys should provide opportunities for open-

ended responses to general items such that their hidden, subjective needs expressible in non-technical lay language may be solicited.

Currently compensation for part-time instructors is based on longevity, not on changes in competency, nor on improvements in outcome measures such as job-placements of students, occupational advancement of students completing the programs, administrators evaluations, etc. In short, the employment system itself for part-time instructors provides no incentive for professional development. However, instructors have a desire to do things better, perhaps based on self-evaluations, in that 86% were willing to undertake in-service training or education for purely "personal growth" reasons.

The professional development delivery system based on results from this study should be so designed that:

1. Professional activities should be intense, short, highly concentrated, local, practical more than theoretical.

2. Part-time instructors are compensated in some way for participating.

3. Moreover, a professional development plan for each part-time instructor based on feedback from students, employers, other faculty, and administrators, should be developed and monitored on a periodic basis by respective deans of instruction. The deans of instruction, furthermore, should respond to local needs based on local professional development plans, should provide leadership in importing appropriate programs for in-service experiences, and should encourage participation of all who may benefit.

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